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Millions From Arms Sales Traced To Iran Group Aiding Kidnappers

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WASHINGTON, March 17 — Several million dollars in profits from Iran arms sales were paid to an Iranian group that financed the kidnappers of Americans in Lebanon, according to United States officials and associates of an Iranian middleman.

The payments, made by the middleman, Manucher Ghorbanifar, meant, in effect, not only that arms were being supplied to Iran, but also that money was being paid as part of the effort to free the hostages, the American officials said.

American and other associates of Mr. Ghorbanifar called the money "ransom," while an American official described it simply as "payments for services rendered."

The payments suggest that profits from the arms sales might have paid for some of the expenses incurred by the kidnappers in holding the hostages.

According to the American officials and associates of Mr. Ghorbanifar interviewed in the United States and in Western Europe, \$2 million to \$3 million of the money that Iran paid for arms was deposited by Mr. Ghorbanifar in 1986 in the Swiss bank account of the Global Islamic Movement.

This Iranian organization helped organize and finance terrorist groups in Lebanon, including the Party of God, the Shiite group believed to have been behind many of the kidnappings.

Other payments by Mr. Ghorbanifar, according to his associates, were intended as political contributions to Iranian leaders, with as much as \$6 million going to Hojatolislam Hashemi Rafsanjani, the Speaker of Parliament, and his family.

Altogether the payments made by Mr. Ghorbanifar to various Iranian officials and groups totaled as much as \$10 million by some accounts.

Mr. Ghorbanifar's lawyer, Stuart F. Pierson, when asked whether his client knew about payments to Iranian officials, said "perhaps," but added, "Now is not yet the time to talk."

Little is known about the finances of the network of kidnappers in Lebanon. Not all the groups are backed by Iran, but those that are, like the Party of God, receive money from several sources. One, according to American officials and associates of Mr. Ghorbanifar, is the Global Islamic Movement, with a bank account in the Crédit Suisse in Zurich.

It could not be determined whether United States officials involved in the Iran arms sales were aware of Mr. Ghorbanifar's payments, although documents in the Tower Commission report made public Feb. 26 indicate that some officials suspected payments were being made to Iranians.

It had not previously been disclosed that payments might have made their way to the kidnappers holding Americans.

The various investigations of the Iran affair are looking into whether bribes were paid to Iranians, according to investigators. But United States laws apply only to bribes given by American citizens or companies.

Mr. Ghorbanifar told President Reagan in a letter late last year, after the Iran arms affair had become known in the United States, that "substantial payments" from the arms sales had gone to Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri and his supporters, according to a copy of the letter reproduced today in The Washington Times.

'Took Care of All the Groups'

The letter did not give details, but the head of the Global Islamic Movement reported to Ayatollah Montazeri, who is a protégé of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Iranian leader.

Although the letter mentioned no other Iranian recipients of payments, an American associate said Mr. Ghorbanifar "took care of all the groups in Iran," including the Global Islamic Movement.

According to the Tower Commission report, tens of millions of dollars in profits wound up in accounts controlled by Lieut. Col. Oliver L. North, then on the National Security Council staff. Other proceeds were controlled by Mr. Ghorbanifar and his associates, the commission concluded. Further complicating the money trail, Mr. Ghorbanifar shared bank accounts with some of the Iranians who received his payments, the Tower report said.

The details about Mr. Ghorbanifar's payments came from associates who were involved in the Iran arms sales or

were told about the sales by Mr. Ghorbanifar. Some American officials say they subsequently gained general knowledge about the payments.

Mr. Ghorbanifar repeatedly failed lie detector tests administered by the Central Intelligence Agency over the last several years, the Tower Commission report said.

According to the Tower Commission report, Mr. Ghorbanifar hinted from the very beginning that any dealings with Iran would require questionable

payments. In November 1984, the report said, Mr. Ghorbanifar told a former United States intelligence official that there might have to be "payment of a cash ransom for the hostages in Beirut with himself as middleman."

A few months later, in a letter to a Saudi associate, Adnan Khashoggi, Mr. Ghorbanifar said any American dealings with Iran might require a bribe under cover of a gift to "one or more of the Iranian officials, politicians or clergymen whose participation we need."

Mr. Ghorbanifar also said in the letter, which was later forwarded to American officials, that any Iranian leader "would turn down any offers of payment made to him by Westerners, especially Westerners he believes to be associated with intelligence agencies."

In the note to President Reagan, Mr. Ghorbanifar said the payments to Ayatollah Montazeri were "financed by loans." Mr. Khashoggi said in an interview earlier this month that he had financed Mr. Ghorbanifar's activities in the Iran arms deals, but when asked about payments to Iranians, Mr. Khashoggi said that whatever Mr. Ghorbanifar "did to open his own doors was his own business."

The Global Islamic Movement was headed until recently by Mehdi Hashemi. The Iranian authorities arrested Mr. Hashemi in October on charges of treason, and said he had confessed to working for Ayatollah Montazeri.

Before the arrest, the organization received a commission of 3 to 5 percent on any procurements for Iran's Revolutionary Guards, according to Iranian sources in Western Europe.

Role of Revolutionary Guards

Hundreds and perhaps thousands of Revolutionary Guards are stationed in Lebanon and are believed to have influence over the Party of God. Revolutionary Guards played a role in helping to find and free some American hostages, according to the Tower report.

A key person in the transfers of money, some of the Ghorbanifar associates said, was Rasour Daryale, an Iranian diplomat based in Switzerland in 1985 and 1986. Mr. Daryale, the Ghorbanifar associates said, was one of the signers on the Crédit Suisse account in Zurich that received some of Mr. Ghorbanifar's payments. Mr. Daryale could not be found for comment.

Associates said Mr. Ghorbanifar also made payments totaling \$750,000 to the Martyrs Foundation, an Iranian organization headed by Hojatolislam Mahdi Karrubi. According to American officials, the organization, with bank accounts in Western Europe, also provides money to militant Shiite groups in Lebanon such as the Party of God.